



THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE CRIMES OF THE NAZI AND SOVIET OCCUPATION REGIMES IN LITHUANIA

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TO

July 28, 2025

The President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania

STATEMENT

By the Members of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania

We, the undersigned members of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, express our **deep concern and strong condemnation** of the recent actions undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania aimed at **undermining the independence and operational capacity** of the Commission's Secretariat.

We emphasize that the **independence of the Commission and its Secretariat** has been a **fundamental principle since the Commission's founding in 1998**, and a **precondition** for the participation of leading Holocaust research and remembrance institutions from around the world. This principle was **agreed upon at the highest political level** and remains **critical for the continued credibility, success, and international recognition** of the Commission's work.

The Commission **strongly condemns the Government's practice** of making decisions related to the Secretariat **without informing, consulting, or coordinating with the Commission itself**. Such unilateral actions **undermine the spirit of cooperation and institutional integrity** that has defined the Commission's work since its inception. Furthermore, we consider the **disregard for the opinion of the Commission's Chairman** to be **unacceptable and deeply disrespectful**, especially

given his central role in leading and representing the Commission both nationally and internationally.

According to Article 2 of the Presidential Decree No. 159 of 7 September 1998, which established the *International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania*, the **Government is tasked with ensuring the organizational support** for the work of the Commission. To fulfill this, a Secretariat was established, **reporting directly to the Commission and its Chairman**. The Government's responsibility also includes **adequate financial support** to ensure that the Commission can fulfill its mission. **Regrettably, despite multiple well-reasoned appeals to allocate even a minimal budget** to support the Commission's activities - including its official meetings - the Government has remained **deaf to these requests and has deliberately underfunded the Commission and its Secretariat**. As a result, a significant portion of the Secretariat's work, especially in the field of **Holocaust and Jewish history education**, depends on the **support of leading international organizations** dedicated to Holocaust research, remembrance, and education. **We consider the Government's recent attempts to interfere with or control this international support to be completely unacceptable.**

We strongly condemn the administrative measures being deployed against the long-serving head of the Secretariat, **Mr. Ronaldas Račinskas** – a person whose **unwavering dedication, creativity, and day-to-day leadership** have earned the Secretariat and the Commission the trust of the **most respected global institutions** engaged in Holocaust research, remembrance, and education.

It was Mr. Račinskas' vision that led to the creation of the **National Network of Tolerance and Civic Education Centers in Lithuania** – a **globally unique educational initiative**. Over the past two decades, this network has grown to include **more than 170 schools** across Lithuania that actively preserve and teach **Lithuanian Jewish history** and the **memory of the Holocaust**.

Under Mr. Račinskas' effective and forward-thinking leadership, the small but highly committed team of the Secretariat has become the **leading organizer of Holocaust education seminars** in Lithuania, as well as the **main coordinator of national commemorations of Holocaust-related remembrance days**.

We believe that Mr. Račinskas' **only "offense"** is his insistence that the Government Chancellery adhere to the laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania and his **clear and principled**

loyalty to the Commission and its Chairman, and his refusal to yield to undue political pressure from Government authorities.

We **categorically reject and denounce** the use of **illegitimate administrative coercion** against Mr. Račinskas, which we interpret as a form of **harassment and institutional mobbing**. These actions appear intended to either **force his submission** to the political directives of a government coalition that includes **antisemitic elements**, or to **remove him from his position**. **In effect, these government-imposed measures have paralyzed and actively sabotaged the Secretariat's ability to carry out its essential functions, thereby obstructing the Commission's mission and operations.**

We therefore consider these actions as a **conscious effort** by the current Government to **undermine and dismantle** the Commission's effective work in **Holocaust research, education, and remembrance**. As such, we view them as an **attack** against the core values and mission of the Commission which will have serious consequences for its reputation which we will not be able to control and will place the country and the government in a position where it seems to endorse antisemitic policies, the major plague of our times.

We hereby **inform the President and the Prime Minister** that the **international community of Holocaust research and remembrance** is **closely monitoring** the developments in Lithuania. Should the **unlawful interference** with the work of the Commission's Secretariat and its leadership continue, **we, the members of the Commission, are prepared to resign in protest**. This would undoubtedly cause **severe reputational damage to the Republic of Lithuania** on the international stage.

We remain committed to the cause of Holocaust remembrance and education in Lithuania. However, we cannot continue our work under conditions of intimidation, political interference, and violation of fundamental principles of independence and integrity.

Respectfully,

The Members of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania

Emanuelis ZINGERIS, Chairman of the Commission, Member of the Seimas, The Signatory of the Act of Independence;

Andrew BAKER, American Jewish Committee (USA);

Jonathan BRENT, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (USA);

Arūnas BUBNYS, Genocide and resistance research Centre of Lithuania;

Christoph DIECKMANN, Frankfurt am Main, independent scholar; currently working for the Ukrainian History Global Initiative;

Algirdas JAKUBČIONIS, Vilnius University;

Šarūnas LIEKIS, Vytautas Magnus University of Kaunas;

Norman NAIMARK, Stanford University (USA);

Alvydas NIKŽENTAITIS, Institute of Lithuanian History;

Antony POLONSKY, Brandeis University (USA);

Dina PORAT, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance

Authority (Israel);

Janos M. RAINER, former Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution
(Hungary);

Saulius SUŽIEDĖLIS, University of Millersville (USA);

Joachim TAUBER, Nordost-Institut (Germany);

Arkady ZELTSER, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance

Authority (Israel).